

How To Save The Demo Scene?

By EP / CosmiK

1) Release great productions instead of bad ones

For several years the scene has largely been producing quite lame productions, without any interest for the masses.

Why?

Because of deadlines!!!

When the scene was starting for me in the nineties, the demos where all different and there was no party coding. There was no deadline and demos were released when the makers thought "now it's mature enough, so we release it". Talking about "mature enough" I mean: without bugs, with enough tests done on enough different configs (30 with 3 years of difference between the fastest and the slowest) to say "now that's bug free" and we are proud of it, it's beautiful, well designed, runs smooth with no slowdowns, we have implemented really good ideas, 95% of the 30 persons we have showed it are happy watching it, it's a hit, let release it at a big party.

Nowadays, quantity and deadlines are major drawbacks of the demo "production":

a. "Everything must be released at this party".

Releasing a bugged demo with tons of problems isn't a good idea: people with little computer knowledge will contact you to help them let your bugged demo run on their machine or in the worst case they will conclude "this piece of shit, this software has crashed my computer, I will never try to see demos anymore". When everything is done under pressure, nothing runs well, the watchers have problem seeing the demos, the demomakers aren't happy because everything is done the crappy way and have anxiety and a lot of twitches.

DEMOS ARE MADE TO MAKE DEMO MAKERS
AND DEMOS WATCHERS HAPPY AND HAPPIER.

So stop releasing lame demos with bad design, bad code, bad graphics, bad music.

RELEASE GOOD DEMOS WITH ORIGINAL MUSIC, EFFECTS, AND GRAPHICS.
TRY TO BE FUNNY, TECHNICAL STUFF ISN'T ENJOYED BY THE MASSES.
MAKE US HAPPY. MAKE US DISCOVER OTHER UNIVERSES.

b. "We must produce 10 to 20 demos this year to be a great group, known by almost everybody on this planet".

The scene isn't a computer shop:
we don't need a big delivery of stuff at a periodic time.
Scene is art, that means it's human:
not everybody has the same life in the scene,
and nobody has the same schedule.

It's better to take perhaps a year to produce a great piece of art with 10 persons around the globe than making a big piece of shit 10 times per year with 3 persons.

DEMOMAKING IS A FREE ACTIVITY.
FREE DON'T MEANS "SHITTY".
FREE MEANS "WE DON'T WANT TO SELL IT, IT'S A GIFT,
IT'S A PRESENT, HOPE IT WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY".
DEMOMAKING IS ART, IT'S QUALITY-BASED.

ART ISN'T INDUSTRY,
ART IS A WAY TO EXPRESS OURSELVES
AND TO SHARE THINGS WE ARE SEEING AND SENSING.

Even if you are releasing a demo for commercial purposes,
to show people who you want to work for, what you can do for them,
releasing a big shit will not be good for your business, believe me.
Employers don't want shit makers in theirs teams.
Employers want dream makers
for their videos productions (games / movie /...).

Here I must talk about a great tradition and behaviour on the ST scene: guest screens!!! In the megademos released on the Atari ST there is almost all the time a lot of effects done by different groups!!! Everything is linked at the end by the main group responsible for the demo. It's really a beautiful idea: people can share their stuff inside one demo, coders, graphicicians, musicians, designers can create in their groups tiny high quality effects and at the end, everything is joined making a good demo. This is why I suggest today to make "history" a good demo with ALL the effects done till today with different types of musics: sound chip first, then mods, then mp3, with different type of gfx style: old heroic fantasy style, tiny characters like in games, sexy pictures, Dali like pics, logos, and different type of effects. All this can be coded by different coders and of course be adapted to nowadays computer (800x600, 1024x768,... with millions colors).

History will be a chronological summary of what was been done this last 14 years on the whole scene. All effects will of course be shown with link between them, with transition towards all these making a whole.

c."We must make a demo in 64Kb / 4Kb / 256b".

Nowadays, we have horse powered computers
with large and fast hard drives,
CD / DVD players, fast internet connection,
and the scene is not using them!!!

Why?

We have stupid rules to make demos:
64 Kb for a demo. Are you mad or what?

Yeah, the product by Chaos of Farbrausch is a great demo,
yes but Chaos isn't exactly the common coder:
he started coding on the C64 15 years ago!!!

15 years of experience,
15 years of hands on code,
15 years of problem solving.

Chaos is for the demo scene like the world champion of figure skating for figure skating: he's skilled, knows a lot of things, knows how to implement them, has seen so much things and have experimentated so much one that he has a great idea of what can be done and can not be done. He knows the limits, that's not the case of everybody.

Chaos isn't ordinary.

He has worked a lot of time and have devoted his life to code. Trying to beat him, is not a good idea, because:

- 1) you will lose your time
- 2) you will make bad stuff and make us unhappy
- 3) fighting to be the first isn't an intelligent way of making demos

In fact demos are so lame because there are too many restrictions and computers have become too different nowadays to get something great for everybody's computer.

Making a 4Kb demo is the most sure way to get it deleted by the users:

"What? A dos program with such a lame resolution,
and the screen is black on the background,
not great at all, let it go to the trash"

Dos exe means old stuff, not at all in the trend.

256b is the same.

In fact, demo scene is dying because it is in late in comparison with the other computer stuff. We have a show on the TV and on the video games and on demos we have anxiety.

Demos are too underground.

They are not beautiful enough to attract a large audience.

In fact, we will have to watch documentary on TV, to open our eyes, our ears and see a lot of different people and things to find ways to get more audience. People want sex, interest, pleasure and joy, humour, suspense, to understand. The scene in fact is too elitist. We are all lamers who with time began more skilled but we all have had to learn - and we can learn under great conditions only. Making the rules too hard to respect, making the scene stuff like a plant without sun, like a human without food: ill, thin and without any hope of better days. As people want happiness, they aren't watching dark scenes productions and sceners are moving to other sources of interests.

MAKE DEMOS WITH GREAT MUSIC, GREAT 2D GFX, BEAUTIFUL TEXTURES,
AND MORE, GREAT DESIGN, GREAT IDEAS AND A STORY:
MAKE DEMOS WITH A AIM, A MESSAGE AND A PLAN LIKE MOVIES.
SPACE IS AVAILABLE USE IT.

4K MAKERS AND PEOPLE FOND OF TINY CODE,
DO BEAUTIFUL WINDOWS SCREEN SAVERS:
ONLY MICROSOFT IS ABLE TO DO A 3D
UNIDIRECTIONAL JERKY STARFIELD ON
A P4 3GHz!!! SHOW THEM HOW TO DO THE GOOD STUFF.

64Kb AND 128Kb MAKERS JUST DO SMALL GAMES:
THIS WILL ATTRACT MORE AND MORE PEOPLE AT PARTIES AND
MAKING THEM SHAREWARE WILL MAKE YOU A LITTLE RICHER.
LIMITING THE SIZE OF EXE IS GOOD FOR ONLY ONE TYPE OF SCENERS:
THE CODERS - AND WE AREN'T ALL CODERS;
GRAPHICIANS, MUSICIANS ARE ALSO
A GREAT PART OF THE WHOLE DEMO SHOW.
LET THEM EXPRESS THEIR ART.

2) Release demos as animations instead of self executable programs

Nowadays problems with drivers and such stuff
are responsible of the bad reputation
of demos and games on the PC platform.
Concerning the demo scene,
the bad quality of demos,
their lack of originality,
their display bugs,
their lack of humour,

their lack of integration with the other parts of the system are responsible of the scene's death.

I'm a computer technician and I can say most of my time is spend at work updating bad drivers and code including windows parts.

SO PLEASE RELEASE DEMOS AS ANIMATIONS:

Demos are static stuff,
Everytime we look at them, we see the same thing.

LINUX, MACHINTOSH, AMIGA, CONSOLES, DVD, DIVX BOXES
AND SOON PHONES USERS WILL THEN BE ABLE TO SEE THEM.

Think of the number of persons who will be able to see your stuff when releasing it as an animation.

Animations have a major drawback: they are static, so no interaction will be possible, with users, nor random generation for example. This is not a problem nowadays because, all demos aren't interactive and random is produced during the initialisation routines.

A well designed demo with a scenario doesn't feature random at all. Animation is the way to get 100% working versions without waiting months to get a fix.

Animation is the way to get 100% portability.

And don't forget that we can rewind, accelerate, skip parts of them, stop, load them easily on all plateforms. We don't need any specific hardware to display them: a celeron 800MHz will show the latest demo as fast as a P4 3.2GHz. Coders will only have to make the demo running one time on their computer and will never have to release a bug fix. That's also a great side effect about this: coders will be free to make more demos instead of fixing old ones.

And with the time won, they will be happier: bug fixing, debugging is a nightmare and time consuming. Yes animations are bigger than exe but nowadays (2/1/2004) with 120 GB at 120 € (160 \$) it's no more a problem, and you must have to know one thing: people have internet connection now and you can do streaming!!!

Concerning my way of consuming demos,
I watch them once
and see them 10 times if they are great,
otherwise I erase them.
If the demo is really great
I burn it on a CD or a DVD to save it for later.
A demo with 44 KHz 16 bit sounds,
lasting for 10 minutes,
in 1024x768 with 16 millions colors at 60Hz takes as raw datas:
105 600 000 bytes for the sound.
That's 103 125 KB or 100,7 MB.
113 246 208 000 bytes for the video.
That's 110 592 000 KB or 108 000 MB or 105,46875 GB.
Once divixed, with divx 4 codec at 30 FPS using mp3 at 160 KBps
it takes 82,97 MB, 84 961 KB.

That means we can put 8 demos lasting 10 minutes each on one CD-R. With a 4,7 GB DVD-R we can put 57 demos!!!

In the near future DVD burner will replace CD burner and DVD capacity will be more than double: more than 100 demos lasting 10 minutes on one DVD-R costing 3€!!!

Divx is shit, you will tell me.

You are right, divx isn't a good codec for demo encoding. We are in the need for something really better: 2048x1536 at 60 fps with 16 millions colors and 44KHz 16 bit sound is the maximum we need. So we need a really better codec. If a coder can code the computer to display 60 fps at 1024x768, it is surely possible to make a video codec which unpack real time, 1024x768 frames and with free cpu time.

Yes, users will be able to see demos
on their computers that are not at all identical
with the one used to make the demos
and without annoying the coders any more
because it can't be a more simpler task than watching an animation:
double click the anim file and windows media player,
quicktime player for the Mac,
anim player for Linux,
anim player for consoles will you show the demo!!!
And everybody will be in peace:
the coders, the users, the site where animations will be stored.

Please also remember that old animations formats can be viewed nowadays too, that's not true for old dos based demos stuff which can't be viewed easily on nowadays computers.

ANIMATIONS IS THE BEST SOLUTION FOR DEMO DISTRIBUTION: time to download a 83 MB file is 11 minutes at 1024 MB/s for viewing from your harddisc but IT'S INSTANTANEOUSLY FOR STREAMED ONES!!!

Web sites which host the demos will make money selling burned CD/DVD with demos inside them, this money will help them paying the hosting costs and new harddrives.

Remember too, that future connections will be even faster, so time to download the stuff will be reduced also.

And animations are easy to make:

- 1) Instead of sending datas to the screen / video memory, save it onto a hard drive, save the sound not to sound buffers but to hardisc too.
- 2) Compress the datas and that's it.

You can even make it in one pass: compress the datas from video and sound buffers and save them to hardisc than display next frame / play next sample.

And remember:

FOR THEM WHAT COUNTS IS ATTRACTION OF THE VISUALS
AND HARMONICS OF SOUND STUFF,
THE REST (THE TECHNOLOGY) IS TOTALLY IGNORED.

Just see the movies at the cinemas: almost nobody is interested in the technology of the films, what is interesting is the final result. It's sad to said that but people are interested in the stuff not the "how it is done". Remember also one think about animations: it hides really well how the demos are made, giving more mystery to the demos. And remember too that animations are impossible to hack: nobody will be able to steal your code because inside animations there is no code at all!!!

Last but not least: beamers aka modern video projectors will show more easily than anything your demo because there will be no problems with frequencies, and such stuff.

REMEMBER THAT THE FINAL RESULT OF DEMOMAKING IS AN ANIMATION: nobody in this world cry when seeing a movie though the actors aren't playing in live.

ANIMATIONS OR DIE!!!

100 FPS MULTIRES ANIMATIONS CODECS WILL SAVE THE SCENE.

3) Remove black and be creative

The problem with nowadays demos is their lack of creativity: 80% of the time I download stuff from scene.org or pouet.net I do not see nice contents: black environments with geometric shapes, quite anxious stuff and this will not drive more people to the scene.

HUMAN QUALITIES ARE THE WAY TO SAVE THE SCENE.

Human beings wants to have illusion, dreams, not bad sides of reality like what they see on the news bulletin. That means they want creative contents, meaning copying even the style is not a great idea. Just take an afternoon to go to the biggest supermarket near you: in the gallery you will see a lots of different things, different structures, different objects, different people, different colors, different musics, different environments, different backgrounds, different products. This is there because we don't have the same needs, we don't have the same desires, we don't have the same needs. That's true for video gamers and that's true for demo watchers.

Try also to visit a museum, a toys shop, an animal shop, well see other things than demos and you will see that demos must change to get more numbers, more tricks and a satisfied audience. To survive, the scene has to change and to be more creative: the nature is an infinite source of creativity, just see how many birds, fishes, animals, fruits, plants have been created by mother nature.

Yes seeing a firm, a factory with rusty pipes, fumes, cars or geometric stuff isn't fun at all, it's simply boring, annoying, and not original at all. It's even more than that: it's frightening. To see what attraction means, play superfrog, charly II, WarCraft III.

Music is the way to talk to the soul, never forget that either. The humans beings with all their different cultures are also a great path to explore to view diversity: the Indians, the Egyptians, the different people of Europe, the United States, Asia, Russia have each ten or even more cultures.

See all these beautiful women from the different parts of the world, see dances, see dancers, see animals in zoo, that's life, that's motion, see their expressions, their eyes, that's life, that's emotions.

The web is a great opportunity to discover them and big books can help us extract something and showing it in demos, and finding not known objects and texture to render. IMHO (In my Humble Opinion), the death of 2D graphics is a big mistake: even nowadays with the horse power we have, months of works are needed to get a 3D project running up. I mean 2D graphics are fastly drawn and have a human touch a 3D textured scene will never have. This is because a pen and a sheet of paper will be forever more simpler to master than a raytracer. The resolution of the human hand on 2D graphics is the pixel, the resolution of a raytracer is conditionned by vectors. A dot is thinner and more precise than a line. A human touch will be rendered in 2D graphics because there will be a man drawing, not a machine rendering: triangle aren't really sexy, nor human, too sharp. Human beings do things for people better than machines do, just because human beings are sensing what they do to the same nature being, just because we have intelligence, feelings, sensations, intuitions, perceptions a computer will never have.

See how Nintendo / Apple are surviving today:
they make video games / computers not industrially,
they made them like craft workers, that means with love.

Making demos with techno music all the time is also a bad habit: there is a lot of surroundings to get with guitar, jazzy, and not know at all type of instruments like trumpet, indian flûte, and such unknown instruments. Remember that music is a really important part of a demo.

MAKE DEMOS WITH IMAGINATION.

MAKE DEMOS WITH ART.

MAKE DEMOS WITH FRIENDS.

MAKE DEMOS WITH THE RIGHT BRAIN PART

WORKING TOGHETER WITH THE LEFT ONE.

MAKE DEMOS WITH LOVE.

4) We have to be realist

Making a demo takes a lot of time and like any other art, the major interest for sceners is the relationship with the members of the audience and with the members of their crew.

If you spend two months to one year for producing something viewed by 200 persons on this planet, then you have lost your time.

You can't say "my demo is great, a lots of people have downloaded it". Downloading isn't saying us what people have thought of our stuff, we must make a satisfaction survey to know what people have found great and what they found not great. We must make demos in relationship with what people want to see and not continuing making stuff enjoyed by 10 000 people on the world.

10 000 persons isn't enough, we must touch over 5 millions of people to make the scene stay alive for years.

To get such an audience we must reorganise the way we make demos: making forums to talk about style, ideas, problems solving and upload stuff and let persons from all around the world to exchange their work.

It's impossible to learn everything alone without help when we begin to code: there are too many things to be mastered. Releasing a demo plan, a document to learn how to make a demo is also a great thing to do. But we must make the things easier: releasing ten to thirty different plans isn't a good idea because demo makers enthusiasts will loose their way. When big gurus will learn newcomers to make something running everything will be better.

Yes, gurus are releasing demos and it takes them a lot of time. So releasing english commented and structured code is also a great things to do: this will help people making great demos.

Code with bad code techniques,
badly written stuff aren't good examples:
it slows downs the understanding,
it slows downs the release of newer demos.
It gives moreover bad habits and make debugging really harder.
It makes coders lose a lot of time.

Well written code speeds up development.
Simpler code, simpler idea,
is the good way to make people understand the inner workings.

Yes I know coders: they will say "giving code to newcomers, never".
That's also a bad habit.

Why?

Simply because nowadays
it's ten times harder to make something running
than in the old dos time:
there are apies, there are dll,
there are development platform (win32, .net, java,...),

there are SDK,
there are languages (C, C++, C#, Asm,...),
there are ides (Integrated Development Environments).

Total code newcomers are totally lost in these universes. There are too much decisions to make and without experience the probability is more than high the project will fail.

Releasing a demo tutorial is a great thing:

I will create www.save-the-scene.free.fr with

1) only one demo coding tutorial made by the best coders:

5 coders per month release each a one page article
in full ascii.txt / word.doc / acrobat.PDF with running code.
They explain what to do first, what to read, what to master.
The mathematical / physical backgrounds
must be explained clearly and simply.
Then the code integration of the theory also
in simple and clear words.
Once the code project is done,
the coder don't make a tutorial for at least 6 months.
In fact, it could even be better if a project was done per month:
the first coder, explain and code the first fifth,
the second coder explain and code the second fifth,
...
the fifth coder explain and code the fifth part.
This will force coders to make the code more easy to understand,
and serviceable. This is important: everybody works for everybody else.

2) only one demo gfx tutorial made by the best graphicicians:

5 graphicicians per month
release each a one page article in full ascii / doc / PDF
with graphics drawn.
They explain what to do first, the techniques used,
the software, the colors theory,
the art rules, the style, the inspiration, the working process.
Once the gfx project is done,
the graphicician doesn't make a tutorial for at least 6 months.
The same idea about coders projects applied to graphicicians:
having a totally finished picture in a ten divided part tutorial
is a good thing for beginners.

3) only one demo sound tutorial made by the best musicians:

5 musicians per month release each a one page article in full ascii
/ doc / PDF with music playing.
They explain, how to sample, the hardware, the software,
how to compose, what to do first.
Once the music project is done,
the musician don't make a tutorial for at least 6 months.
The same idea about coders projects can also be applied to musicians,
but here, musicians must have the same spirit it what they explain,
is not only techniques but art, melody making,...

4) the same for 3D artists, designers, and so.

All the tutorials must be uploaded on one internet site with mirrors

updated just after the upload was done.

Articles must have been checked by 5 persons

in their sphere of activity before being released.

Translations into English, French, German, Spanish

and - why not - Chinese can be also great things to release.

Yes we want quality stuff not quantity:

one main article and 4 high quality translations,

that's throughout the world, really great.

Please also notice that making a demo is possible with a maximum of 6 persons and preferably 3 per effects, because it's really hard to do good stuff with more persons involved. 5 persons to release one demo is the best compromise: 2 coders, one musician, one 2D graphician, one 3D artist. graphicians and musicians do the design as they have the feeling to do it.

And coders are also welcome in this process as they can say: "that's possible, that's not possible, I can do it like this, do you like it like that".

A good demo is a demo with synchro between the parts and the music: it's like dance with transition, with a time line.

Showing big 3D objects on the screen with a music isn't satisfactory at all.

We want a show which impresses us, we want a story, we want sense. We don't want 3D with music in the background without any link between them. Demo isn't the bulletin news, demo is a show like an opera or circus show.

We must be impressed by what we see, it must stagger us.

Good examples of good demos are IMHO:

1) Frb 25 the popular demo by Farbrausch

2) 9 fingers by Spaceballs

3) Odyssey by Alcatraz

There is rhythm, there is synchro,

there is a lot of animation, of life, of motion.

There is no bad news, no aggressive sound or shapes.

There is happiness, ideas, originality.

There is a plan, and a main idea:

make us happy by using emotions.

There is not stuff already seen,

no technical show understandable by engineers only.

Technology must be invisible,

it's like at the cinema,

we mustn't see the mechanics, the inner workings.

People aren't interested by technical stuff,

it's for them a source of problems.

The management is really the biggest problem, ask people on the scene who work on big projects how they do it. Trying to be organised like the movies makers can be also a great solution to loose the least of time. Defining clearly and concisely on a paper with drawings and numbers the aims to reach and the time limits are also great things to do.

We must also change the demo parties: a big screen with a lot of crowd that doesn't know what the scene is but knows what playing quake is, isn't at all the ambience to release a good production.

People who go to a party must be here to watch demos, to trade coding secrets, to learn how to do such effects, to learn techniques to draw / render, to learn music making.

This is a reunion of artists, not a lan party, nor a dance floor.

When I began to code, 12 years ago, I started with friends in a small studio in the country. The guys were Joker, Kyd, Athee, BigFoot, Blanche Neige, Bill, Niko, they were members of latinoids and MJJ Prod and some of them still are. When I arrived, rabbits and birds welcomed me on the road. That was a creative environment, quiet, warmy, great for health.

Cities with a lot of noises, vibrations and interruptions like phone calls aren't great at all.

And parties are even worse.

We have to be in good shape and health to release something great for the humanity. We are suffering enough traumas from the bulletin news, telefilms, movies, cinema, life and work. Demo parties are not great at all for coding or doing anything else creative: you are surrounded by people moving around you, there is too much noise, you sleep on the floor, food is fastly eaten and there are guns detonations coming from the gamers hifi.

Make demos at home with friends and stop making yourself ill on parties.

Demos must be made in a creative and positive spirits.

Demos are seen be children, boys and girls, aged and not so aged ones.

DEMOS MUST MAKE HAPPY
BOTH WHILE THEY ARE MADE AND WHILE THEY ARE WATCHED BY EVERYBODY.

5) We must change sceners

And we must change ourselves:
we are the elite.

Why are you making yourself uncomfortable and ill?
Are you drinking?
Are you eating absolutely everything?

Hey, this is your health, this is your life, don't waste it. We need you in good shape, in good health, in good mental health, yes we need good coders, good musicians, good graphicians, and we need a good spirit, without competition,
"I'm the best, you are a lamer" is not a good spirit,
it's the spirit of bad-mannered people.
We want adult, responsible people in the scene.
Do you want to show the world, people inebriated?
Do you want to show the world, people smoking?
Is this the scene's picture world must have?
No, no, no.

When I was at my first "big" party, the sea, sun and sex 1 at ST Esteve near Perpignan in the south of France, I was really impressed by a great fact: No guys were drinking alcohol, and there was no trash on the floor. At my left there was a hard rock fan, wearing a megadeath T-Shirt, with long hairs. After some times, I suddenly understood, this guy was a coder, and a cracker of Hoodlum!!! 3 rows of tables and chairs behind us, were Gengis and the Bomb crew: they were coding a demo and were making a doom clone for the Amiga computers. At this party, I got a cracked version of this game released by guess who? Hoodlum!!! And the next night, the demo deadline was over: the demos were shown on the big screen. When the bomb one was shown, on the scrollers, there was a sentence about Hoodlum and their crack!!! "Hoodlum, the only crackers who released a demo version of our game as a crack!!!". There was a roar of laughter!!! Yes these "enemies" were on the same place and they were not making wars, they were laughing without drinking, there were doing spiritual humour :) That was really a great moment.

This party was not a really big party: 200 persons, but the atmosphere was really great. Sadly there was no room dedicated to sleep and at night there was a non stop fractal zoomer on the big screen and bad movies, which was annoying. Something greater would have been to stop any displaying on screen when nobody was watching the screen.

But overall this party was great. This was a scener party only: there were no people outside the scene. It doesn't mean, they were forbidden, but this was a real party with no lan games nor disco music: guys interested in these can do it around at night near the beach.

Sceners are healthy people, with a brain working,
we are artists, we have talents, show them now and forever.
We will make the beautiful and spiritual future of the technological
art called demos.
Respect yourself.
Yes, YEs, YES.

Written in the hope of making the scene become stronger
and better for the humanity.
I don't want to hurt anybody by my words.
I simply want the scene not to die, but to change, evolve and develop.

Emmanuel Poirier
EP / CosmiK